



23 April, 2020

To: Ohio Congressional Delegation

From: Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose

Re: Conflicting Information from the USPS related to Election Mail

Colleagues,

Thank you for the leadership you have shown during this challenging time for our state, nation and world. As we all navigate through the Covid-19 pandemic, every day presents new and unique challenges. Whether on behalf of our constituents or in our personal lives, we all are taking on these challenges and finding ways to overcome them.

As you know, following Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Amy Acton's order closing in-person polling locations for the March 17th primary election, the 88 county boards of elections and my office have been tasked with completing this primary election by April 28th as a vote-by-mail election – and doing so virtually overnight.

Such an effort has required an all-hands-on-deck approach, and as we near the conclusion of the election, I am happy to report Ohioans from all walks of life have stepped up. Whether it's the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Ohio Right to Life, AFL-CIO, Ohio Library Council, the Ohio Grocers Association, or so many others who have lent a hand to make this election a success, Ohioans have once again shown the nation what it means to be #InThisTogether.

As anyone would expect, completing this election has certainly brought with it the unexpected and the unplanned. Fortunately, as each challenge has presented itself, my team and the bipartisan teams of election officials at our 88 county boards of elections have stepped up and worked hard to find solutions.

However, as we approach the April 28th deadline to complete the election, we are faced with an obstacle that is outside of our control, and we need your help to overcome it. As Ohioans rush to submit their vote-by-mail requests, and our boards work overtime to fulfill them, we are finding that the delivery of the mail is taking far longer than what is published by the United States Postal Service (USPS) as expected delivery times. Instead of first-class mail taking 1-3 days for delivery, we have heard wide reports of it taking as long as 7-9 days. As you can imagine, these delays mean it is very possible that many Ohioans who have requested a ballot may not receive it in time.

Along with our colleagues at the county boards of elections, we have made attempts to work with the USPS to find alternatives that will improve the time it takes to have mail delivered, but have so far been largely unsuccessful. While we certainly understand and respect the adversity that mail carriers are facing right now, something must be done to deliver elections mail promptly so Ohioans may have their voice heard in this primary election.

My recommendations are the following:

1. **Assign additional staff to local USPS offices** and encourage extra hours, *even on Sunday, April 26, 2020*, to ensure prompt delivery of election-related mail.
2. **Work immediately to identify delivery standard shortcomings.** Election officials have reported numerous issues this election cycle, from missed mail deliveries at local boards of elections to delivery times in excess of 10 days for first class letters. The underlying issues must be immediately identified and corrected.
3. **Conduct a thorough search at USPS facilities for unprocessed mail.** Management at all local USPS offices and processing facilities should conduct a thorough review to ensure all election-related mail is being properly processed.
4. **Ensure each USPS office promptly provides mail to the county boards of elections on Saturday, April 25, 2020, and, upon receipt of the absentee ballots which are being mailed to the voters, have the necessary resources on hand to provide for prompt delivery of mail to voters.** Ohio law has established that the last day to request an absentee ballot before the April 28th primary deadline is Saturday, April 25th. This creates a very tight turnaround for both boards of elections and the USPS, so every effort must be made to ensure ballots are received in a timely manner.

I can certainly appreciate the multitude and complexity of the problems our nation is currently working to overcome. However, we must never give an inch in our fight for that most sacred of rights – the right to vote. I hope I can count on your support as we work to successfully complete Ohio's primary election.

If your staff have any questions, please have them contact my Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs, Chris Oliveti at COliveti@OhioSoS.gov or 614-306-7109. Additionally you are always welcome to contact me at Frank@OhioSoS.gov or 614-387-7323.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose